

Letter from Upper Marlboro', Md

[Correspondence of the Baltimore Sun]

UPPER MARLBORO', MD., Oct 10, 1878

Appearance of a Female Lawyer Before the Prince George's Circuit Court

Mrs. Belva A. Lockwood, one of Washington's female lawyers, made her first appearance before the courts of this State yesterday in appearing before Judge Magruder, holding the Circuit Court here, to make a motion in an administrator's case in which she represented the plaintiff. Judge Magruder declined to hear her, giving as a reason that so far no female had been admitted to the bar in the courts of Maryland or in the districts where he held court. He, however, allowed one of the members of the bar to read the motion and pleadings prepared by Mrs. Lockwood, and they were made a part of the record of the case the same as if they had been the work of the brain of a male attorney.

Mrs. Lockwood said she did not like to embarrass any of the male members of the bar any more by having them read her pleadings or motions, and asked admittance to the bar as an attorney. In support of her request she read her certificate of admission to the Washington bar and courts elsewhere, and a certificate from Mr. R. J. Meigs, the clerk of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, declaring that she was a member of the bar in good standing.

The court admitted that if the applicant was a male the certificate would be all that was necessary to gain admission to the bar here, but that in Mrs. Lockwood's case he would ask her to file a brief in which she could set forth her claims at more length, to which he said he would give his most careful consideration. This Mrs. Lockwood promised to do some time next week, and she had the last word by reading the laws of Maryland in regard to admission to the bar, which in effect are that attorneys of other courts in good standing can be admitted on showing the necessary certificates of such facts. She said the law read "he" or "his" in all its parts and to show that this use of words did not affect her in any way to her prejudice she quoted from Webster's Dictionary and other authorities that "man" meant a "woman" as well, and she held that "he" or "his" might properly mean "she" or "her." She then quoted from various legal writers establishing what no lawyer nor the court denied, that her claim especially in regard to the meaning of the words referred to, was based on logical and admitted grounds. Judge Magruder said there was a question behind that which would have to be considered.

Mrs. Lockwood says she is confident from the conversations she held with members of the bar after leaving the court room that the great majority of them are in sympathy with her and admit her claims, and that none of them fear that her admission will in any way hurt them or that she will get business that otherwise would go to them. Afterwards Mrs. Lockwood had a very pleasant interview with Judge Magruder. She will, it is thought, file her brief next week. It will be similar to that filed by her before the United States Court of Claims and Supreme Court of the United States. Mrs. Lockwood has practiced before the courts in Washington for several years and has been very successful.